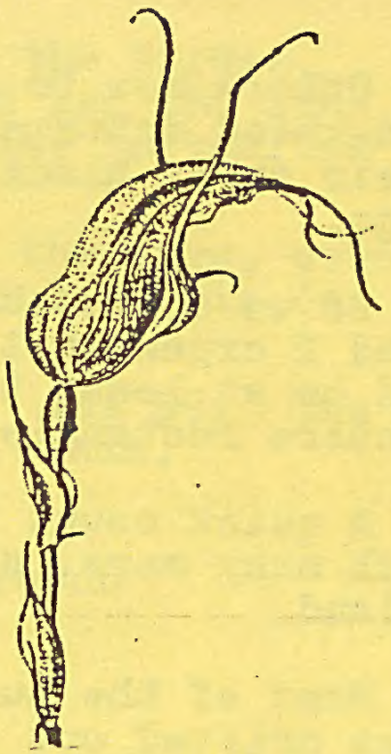
CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST



March '83

Nº 77

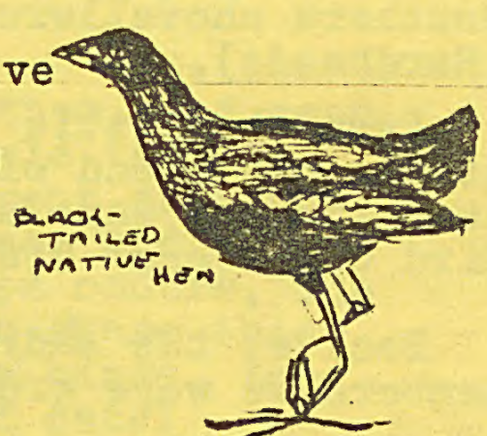
BENDIGO SEWERAGE PONDS BIRD SANCTUARY

(C.F.N.C. Excursion , 12-2-1983)

Planned as a bird observing excursion to include a visit to the Barkers Creek Reservoir, the afternoon was found to be all too short to do justice to the wealth of birdlife to be seen at the big lake at Epsom, so we decided to leave North Harcourt for another day.

Turning left off the highway just past the Pottery we crossed Bendigo Creek and turned right into Wallenjoe Road. What stories of gold-rush days, mateships and miners' claims that name evokes!

Leaving the cars at the roadside near the gate we first had a good look at the variety of birds on and about the small swamp on the left of the road.



The 15 species of birds seen there included about a dozen Black-tailed native hens, which Graham Pizzey, in his most useful book, 'A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia', describes as 'rare to locally abundant'. Ian Rowley in 'Bird Life' says that since it is neither a game bird nor a pest, no one has studied it closely. We know little more about its life or movements than did the early settlers when the streets of Adelaide and Perth were invaded by it soon after these cities were founded,

Others new to some of us from Castlemaine were the Red-kneed dotterels, and the graceful Pied stilts, with their smart black coats, white shirts and long ,pink legs.

As we approached the large main lake north of the road I expected to see the hundreds of birds take wing and go at least to the far end of the ten or twenty hectare rectangle of fairly clear water.

A quick count showed 104 Black swans visible, with many more, no doubt, out of sight beyond the nearby island.

Most of the hundreds of birds - swans, teal and grebes just drifted out a bit further from the shore, as though they were used to being ogled by a dozen or more human beings with binoculars and telescope. And why not? It must have been some kind human being who planted those nesting boxes, soores of them, away out in the lake. What a considerate public authority it was too, to include such a fine island refuge and some great tall trees in its planning of this essentially practical public utility.

Mrs K. Turner was generous with use of her splendid new secret weapon --- a realbird observer's tripod-mounted telescope! With its help we were able to identify those twelve great white birds in the dead tree at the far end of the lake as Yellow-billed spoonbills, and the black ones as Large black cormorants.

When we walked around the bank to the north end the scope was again a great help in solving the problem of identifying certain odd shaped ducks. They were Southern shovellers, Musk ducks and White-eyed ducks (Hardheads).

Even the little waders away up the far end of the marsh at the north end of the reserve were identified by Mrs T. as being the same as those seen during a memorable recent Bird Observers' Club campout, -- Sharp-tailed sandpipers.

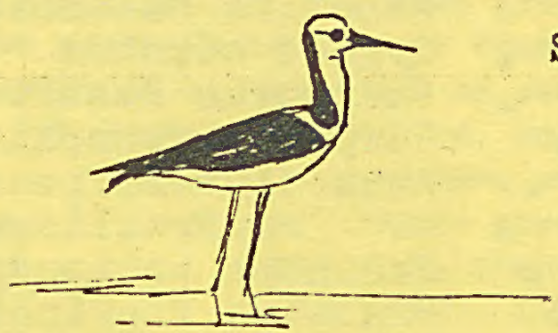
Back at the shady tree where we had left certain Club members we were greeted by 'But you didn't see a Spotted

crake, did you?'. He, the botanist among the birdos, had sighted a seldom seen rail. He even had the luck to have a Bendigo friend arrive just in time to confirm the sighting.

A late afternoon coffee was enjoyed at the cars, even by the forgetful excursion leader, who had left his,(as well as his good binocs!), at home.

Number of species sighted at the 'farm' was 39. The Bird enthusiasts at least will want to go again.

Stan Bruton



BIRDS IN THE DROUGHT

Most people, at some time or other, probably enjoy feeding birds in gardens or at camp sites. Perhaps fewer have had the pleasure of watching them as they drink and splash in water provided in our own gardens, and which, in this year of drought, the birds come to rely on very much. Bees, too!

As the weather has become hotter, and water in nearby dams and creeks has dried up, the number of birds coming regularly to our water dishes, and small lily pond, has increased dramatically. Over 20 different kinds, ranging from the tiny striated thornbills and pardelotes, through wrens, robins,and fantails, to tree creepers, honeyeaters and thrushes and on to rosellas, bronze-wing pigeons, magpies and currawongs, come, many several times daily, to drink and bathe.

We derive much pleasure from watching them, and each newcomer creates excitement. It is a simple task to provide a container, or several, of different area and depth, to suit the needs of various species, and to keep them filled with clean water. Perhaps others, who may not have done so before, would like to share this pleasure, and by doing so help to save the birds, for whom water is vital. CAUTION . Beware of cats!

Wyn Palmer.

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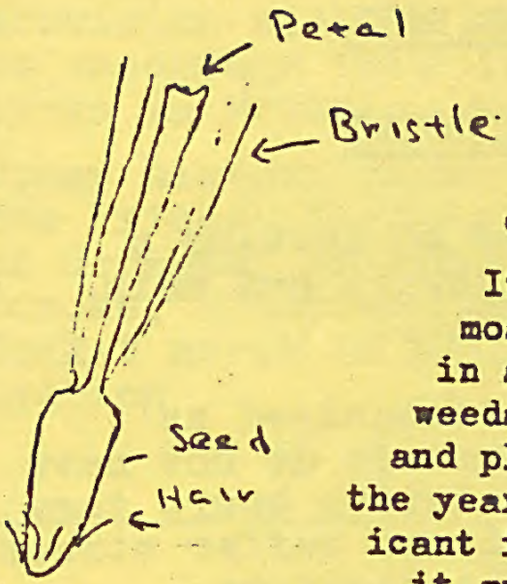
BIRD LIST FOR BENDIGO SEWERAGE PONDS BIRD SANCTUARY 12-2-83

Compiled by Stan Bruton and George Broadway.

Red-kneed dotterel . .	Erythrogonys cinctus
Black-tailed native-hens	Gallinula ventralis
Welcome swallow . . .	Hirundo neoxina
Dusky moorhen . . .	Gallinula tenebrosa
White ibis	Threskiornis molucca
Straw-necked ibis . .	T. spinicollis
Coot	Fulica atra
Common starling . .	Sturnus vulgaris
Noisy miner . . .	Manorina Melanocephala
Black swan	Cygnus atratus
Red-rumped parrots . .	Psephotus Haematonotus
Swamphen	Porphirio porphirio
Grey teal	Anas gibberifrons
Black duck	A. superciliosa
Hoary-headed grebes . .	Podiceps poliocephalus
Yellow-billed spoonbills	Platalea flavipes
Superb blue wren . .	Malurus cyaneus
White-fronted chats . .	Ephthianura albifrons
Southern shoveller . .	Anas rhynchotis
Goldfinch	Carduelis Chloris
Little ravens . . .	Corvus mellori
White-eyed duck . . .	Aythya australis
Rainbow bee-eater . .	Merops ornatus
Black cormorant . . .	Phalacrocorax carbo
Little pied cormorant .	P. melanoleucos
Masked (spur-winged)plover	Vanellus miles (race novaehollandiae)
Pied stilts	Himantopus himantopus
Sharp-tailed sandpipers .	Calidris acuminata
Black-fronted dotterel .	Charadrius melanops
Musk ducks	Biziura lobata
Peaceful doves . . .	Geopelia humeralis
White-necked heron . .	Ardea pacifica
White-faced heron . .	A. novaehollandiae
Silver gull	Larus novaehollandiae
Eastern rosella . . .	Platycerus eximius
Willy wagtail . . .	Rhipidura leucophrys
Magpie lark	Grallina cyanoleuca
White-backed magpie . .	Gymnorhina hypoleuca
Spotted crake . . .	Porzana fluminea

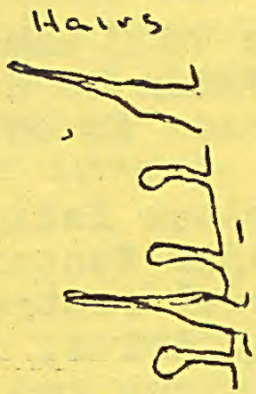
One sighting was made, it is believed, of the spotted crake, while another tern-like bird was observed but it was too for away for accurate identification.

G.B.



STINKWORT

Stinkwort (or Dittrichia graveolens ... formerly Indula graveolens) is a weed of late summer to early autumn.



It is interesting that although most of the native herbs die down in summer, many of the introduced weeds such as stinkwort, cats-ear and plantain can keep green throughout the year. Stinkwort is rather insignificant in spring, but as summer advances it grows to 30-40 cm, and takes on a cone-like shape, and the yellow daisy flowers appear in March and April. Stinkwort may grow in paddocks and is common along roadsides.

The plant is well worth examining under a microscope. Most parts of it are covered with glandular hairs - the sketch shows two kinds. These give off a strong-smeeling oil (hence the name s graveolens and stinkweed). The oil can cause dermatitis, so gloves are advisable when handling the plant.

The seeds, like many daisy seeds have bristles attached that catch the wind. The seeds also have hairs angled to catch in the fur of passing animals - and also to puncture the stomach of animals that eat them.

All in all, its some plant! Its ability to grow in dry situations, and to repel would be eaters by chemical and mechanical means make its success as a weed beyond doubt.

E.P.

Finance

Cash in hand $14-42
Bal in Bank 135-11

Acc Ed Centre Pd$56-00 (May-Dec. '82)

Membership fees are now due.

ROADSIDES CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
ROADSIDES TOPIC

THE VICTORIAN HIGHWAY PARK CONCEPT

In 1976 the Victorian Government decided to develop a system of Highway Parks on Victorian highways and main roads in an effort to reduce the road toll.

Driver fatigue and tiredness have been recognised as major factors in road accidents. Car drivers do not have legal restraints on the numbers of consecutive hours they may drive, with the result that many drivers suffer stress fatigue and tiredness which results in inattention, slower reflexes and drivers falling asleep at the wheel, generally with predictable results.

It is recognised that driver fatigue starts to affect a driver after about three hours, but this can be accelerated by such factors as night driving, heavy traffic, fog or disturbances in the car caused by children.

The highway park concept envisages a network of strategically spaced parks which will provide areas for motorists to rest for a period of time from a few minutes to a number of hours.

The Department of Crown Lands and Survey is implementing this concept. A number of parks will be located approximately 1-2 hours driving time from the outskirts of melbourne, and other parks will be located a further 1-2 hours driving time distant from these parks. They will generally be large in area and provide relaxing surroundings and facilities which will be aimed at attracting drivers off the road.

Each park will serve the network function, that is, every park will have similar basic facilities which fulfil the basic park concept. These include toilet blocks, barbeques, picnic tables and interpretative facilities to allow the public to familiarize themselves with individual parks. However, each park will have its own individual style of development which enhances its character and intrisnic appeal and most probably will reflect a regional identity.

Overnight stoppers will be permitted on an informal basis in the interest of road safety. (However, no

provision will be made for powered sites or like facilitie to encourage this use). This is a feature of similar parks in Britain, on the Continent and in Canada.

Other highway parks have been developed at Stratford on the Princes Highway, Cherrypool on the Henty Highway south of Horsham, Wannon on the Glenelg Highway, Jane Duff near Goroke, Runnymede on the Northern Highway and Broken Bucket north of Nhill, and other sites are under investigation

MILDURA CAMPOUT

MAY 14th - 15th '83

The W.V.F.N.C.A. Campout at Hattah, hosted by the Sunraysia Naturalists Research Trust, is now to be held at Mildura due to the exceptionally dry season. There is plenty of accomodation at Mildura, but as it is School holidays, a firm booking should be made by the end of March. Apex Caravan Park is recommended, b because, among other advantages, all the Field Nats can be accomodated in one areaengendering a real togetherness. Details are available from the Secretary.

TOURING?

We have recieved two brochures for tours, one from Wild Country Tours of Mackay, Queensland, advertising their Iron Range Bush Camp, offering occomodation (Tent style) three good meals a day plus transport to and from Cairns, for $31 per day and the Cairns - Iron Range - Cairns airfare of $193 (Aug '82 price) Information sheets are available if you are interested.

The other one is form Kingston Tours of Stawell and is a Coach Camping tour especially for Naturalists and in co-operation with W.V.F.N.C.A.. Because the June tour of Atherton Tablelands, Cairns and North Queensland is booked out another tour is now to leave on July 16. It departs from Stawell but passengers can be picked up in Bendigo. The cost is $570 for 23 days. Entrance fees to parks etc on the itinary are not included.

Full details are available. Please ask the secretary, Mrs Audrey Bruton.

CLUB PROGRAMME

Meetings

Fri Mar 11 Tim Cox, Leader of Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers, a group who do jobs in National Parks, etc.- under the guidance of the Rangers or Fisheries and Wild Life officers - at their own expense.

Thurs Mar 24. 7.30 Committee meeting

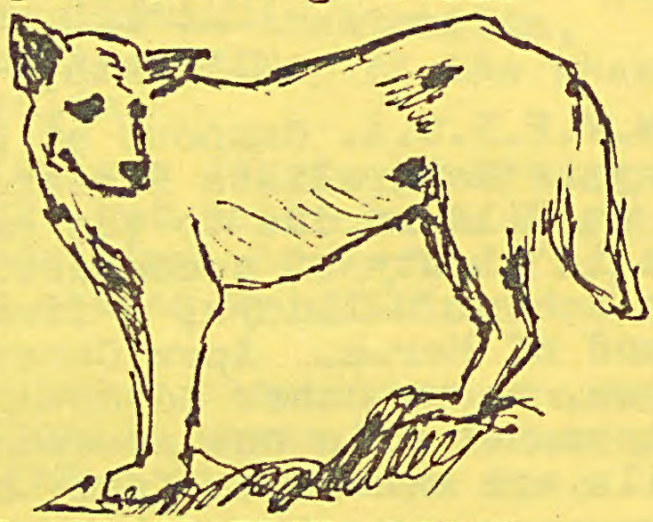
Fri April8 Bruce Jacobs Dingos

Outings

March 12 Expedition Pass and Barkers Creek Reservoirs. Birdwatching.

Sat 19 Mar Cairn Curran at Welshmans reef. Also birdwatching.

April 9 Dingo Farm.



VICTORIAN NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION APPEAL

At the April meeting members will be given an opportunity to make a donation towards the Association's new 'home', a property that they have leased for a firm 5 years with the option of a further 5 years, at 285-7 Little Lonsdale street.

$20,000 has already been spent and another $20,000 is still needed to make the 3 story building a pleasant place for both workers and visitors.

Still needed are:

Shop fittings	$1600
Heating system for Centre	4000
Additional toilet meeting room	800
Disabled persons' toilet ground floor	1200
Ceiling fans for top floor	400
Provision for fitting of doors	500
Bromide camera and typesetter	11500
	$20000

Full details are available in the tabled letter.